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ABSTRACT

The paper describes a program developed at Alabama A and M University to train teachers to work with gifted children. The approach involves building on the experiences and backgrounds of teachers from other academic areas, and is designed to assist prospective teachers in developing competencies in both subject area specialties and gifted education. The program is divided into two parts: the master's degree program and the educational specialist degree program. Eighteen teaching competencies to be developed by the program are listed, along with admission requirements and course requirements. Three particular curriculum plans in the program are described, each designed to meet the needs of a particular group of teachers (those holding master's degree certificates in a subject area specialty, those holding master's degree certificates in gifted education, and those holding master's degree certificates in a nonsubject area specialty and who do not hold a degree certificate in gifted education). Program course descriptions in gifted education are appended. (DLS)

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A TEACHER TRAINING PROPOSAL IN GIFTED EDUCATION

by

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Gifted Education Teacher Training

1980

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An analysis of the educational scene today indicates a strong interest in and emphasis on the needs of gifted and talented students and on appropriate educational experiences for them. The U. S. Office of Education staff has declared gifted education to be one of its top priorities. If we are to deal effectively with this priority, one of the major concerns needing to be addressed is the training of teachers, administrators, and supervisors of gifted programs. Several training programs have been developed and implemented. In this paper, I shall present an approach which I have developed at Alabama A & M University that might be used by other educational institutions and agencies to provide trained personnel for gifted education programs. This approach involves building on the experiences and backgrounds of teachers from other academic areas.

The program is designed to train teachers who have either a baccalaureate degree in a teaching field or who have a Master's degree in a teaching field. The program is designed to assist prospective teachers in developing competencies in both subject area specialty and gifted education. The program is divided into two basic parts: the Master's degree program and the Educational Specialist degree program. Both degree programs which build on a teaching field include such topics as:

1. Nature and Needs of the Gifted and Talented
2. Assessment and Evaluation of Children with High Potential
3. Curriculum Design, Teaching Strategies, and Evaluation

4. Program Design and Evaluation
5. Current Research in Gifted Education
6. Practicum in Gifted Education.

After completion of one of the programs, the prospective teacher will be able to demonstrate the following competencies:

1. Discuss the characteristics of intellectually, creatively, psychosocially, artistically (visual and performing arts), and kinesthetically gifted children.
2. Discuss the educational needs of various types of gifted children.
3. Discuss the various models of educational objectives as they relate to gifted children.
4. Select appropriate tests and/or techniques for identifying gifted children.
5. Administer and/or interpret appropriate tests and techniques of identification.
6. Develop a comprehensive program for identifying the gifted in a school and/or school system.
7. Discuss the characteristics and needs of the culturally different and/or handicapped gifted.
8. Discuss psychological models for gifted education.
9. Discuss curriculum development principles and models for the gifted.
10. Demonstrate the ability to use curriculum models in school settings.
11. Demonstrate skills in using various teaching techniques

and strategies appropriate for the gifted.

12. Develop a program of instruction for children, given data regarding their exceptional abilities and levels of development.
13. Discuss resources, materials, and curricula which are available for gifted children.
14. Describe alternate program settings and administrative arrangements for meeting the needs of the gifted.
15. Discuss various state and local programs for the gifted.
16. Develop and/or demonstrate the use of various techniques for student and program evaluation.
17. Demonstrate the ability to create a productive learning climate.
18. Discuss current research in gifted education and its implications for practice in the field.

Admission requirements for the Master's degree program include the following standards:

1. Hold a certificate in a teaching field.
2. Have a GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale.
3. Make the following score on one of the following tests:
   a. Graduate Record Exam--at least a score of 1000 on the aptitude section.
   b. National Teachers Exam--at least 1200 composite score.
   c. Miller's Analogies Test--at least 50.
4. Have a personal interview to assist in determining an individual's potential for teaching gifted children.

5. Have on file three letters of recommendation; one from the school superintendent if currently employed.
6. Have completed at least three successful years of teaching experience.

Students who exhibit strong potential for teaching the gifted on the initial interview and evaluation, but fail to meet the test score requirements, will be accepted conditionally with the option to take up to 12 hours of graduate study. At that time, the student will be reevaluated based on his performance in the program to determine whether the student may remain in the program.

The curriculum for this degree is divided into three basic areas which include professional education core, gifted education core and subject area specialty. The following courses are required for the degree:

I. Professional Education Core
   1. Psychological, Sociological and Cultural Foundations of Education -- 3 hours
   2. Theories of Curriculum Development -- 3 hours
   3. Educational Statistics -- 3 hours

II. Gifted Education Core
   1. Introduction to the Study of Exceptional Children -- 3 hours
   2. Nature and Needs of the Gifted -- 3 hours
   3. Assessment of Children with High Potential -- 3 hours
   4. Curriculum Design and Teaching Strategies for the Gifted -- 3 hours
   5. Program Design and Development for the Gifted -- 3 hours
   6. Seminar: Research in Gifted Education -- 2-6 hours

7. Practicum: Gifted Education -- 3 hours

Total -- 20-24 hours

III. Subject Area Specialty -- 9 hours

(9 graduate hours in a single content area preferably in arts and/or sciences)

Total in all -- 38-42 hours

Persons holding a teaching certificate in a subject area will be advised to continue in that subject area. Elementary education, special education, guidance and counseling majors will be individually advised as to a subject area specialty based on their undergraduate background and teaching experience. They will be evaluated on subject area strength and advised accordingly.

The Educational Specialist degree program is designed to meet the needs of three types of teachers:

1. Teachers holding a Master's degree in a subject area.
2. Teachers holding a Master's degree in gifted education.
3. Teachers holding a Master's degree in a non-subject area (elementary, special education, and/or guidance majors).

The program is designed to assist teachers in developing competencies in gifted education and a subject area specialty.

The program involves three curriculum plans, each of which addresses the needs of a particular group of teachers. After the completion of the program, each group should have similar competencies, each beginning with different backgrounds and competencies but exiting with common competencies.

The three plans are as follows:

Curriculum Plan I. This plan is designed for persons holding a Master's degree certificate in a subject area specialty.

I. Professional Education Core

Advanced Curriculum Development	3 hours
Philosophy of Education	3 hours
Advanced Evaluation of Teaching and Learning	3 hours

II. Gifted Education Core

Introduction to Exceptional Children	3 hours
Nature and Needs of the Gifted	3 hours
Assessment of Children with High Potential	3 hours
Curriculum Design and Teaching Strategies	3 hours
Program Design and Development	3 hours
Seminar: Curriculum Design Related to Subject Area Specialty	3 hours
Internship: Gifted Education	6 hours
Total	36 hours

The persons holding Master's degrees in a subject area will develop skills in gifted education as their emphasis since they already have the subject area competencies.

Curriculum Plan II: This plan is designed for persons holding a Master's degree certificate in Gifted Education.

I. Professional Education Core

Advanced Curriculum Development	3 hours

Philosophy of Education	3 hours
Advanced Evaluation of Teaching and Learning	3 hours
II. Gifted Education Core	
Subject Area Specialty*	12 hours
Seminar: Curriculum Design Related to Subject Area Specialty	3 hours
Interrship: Gifted Education	6 hours
Creative Problem Solving	3 hours
Group Dynamics: Emerging Leadership	3 hours
Total	36 hours

This plan emphasizes competencies in a subject area built onto gifted education competencies from the Master's degree in Gifted Education.

Curriculum Plan III: This plan is designed for persons holding a Master's degree certificate in a non-subject area specialty and who do not hold a degree certificate in gifted education.

I. Professional Education Core	
Advanced Curriculum Development	3 hours
Philosophy of Education	3 hours
Advanced Evaluation of Teaching and Learning	3 hours
II. Gifted Education Core	
Introduction to the Study of Exceptional Children	3 hours
Nature and Needs of the Gifted	3 hours
Assessment of Children with High Potential	3 hours

Curriculum Design and Teaching Strategies	3 hours
Program Design and Development	3 hours
Internship: Gifted Education	6 hours
Subject Area Specialty*	12 hours
Total	42 hours

*All programs based on a Master's degree certificate will be individually designed in view of the student's subject area specialty background and teaching experience.

Gifted education core courses are described in the Appendix. Each course in the gifted education core has a practicum and/or laboratory component in it. The laboratory activities engaged in by students are related to the nature of the individual courses. For example, during the nature and needs course, students will be observing gifted students in learning settings to determine their characteristics, needs, and uniqueness. Activities might include recording and reporting behaviors, interviews with parents, school personnel and/or gifted students, surveys of gifted students on specific topics, and other "who are they" activities.

This program plan attempts to train persons from various teaching backgrounds to work with the gifted and talented, and at the end of the program have teachers trained who have common skills in both gifted education and subject area specialty.

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Appendix

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS: GIFTED EDUCATION

Introduction to the Study of Exceptional Children:

This course is designed to enable the student to acquire scientific information concerning the nature, etiology, and the treatment of those disabilities of children which cause them to be exceptional.

Nature and Needs of the Gifted:

This course is designed to acquaint the student with the characteristics and educational and psychological needs of children who are intellectually, creatively, psychosocially, artistically and/or kinesthetically gifted as well as those of the disadvantaged gifted.

Assessment of Children with High Potential:

This course is designed to assist the student in developing a knowledge of and skills in the use of various assessment techniques and strategies for identifying various types of giftedness. Both formal and informal techniques will be studied and opportunities provided to learn how to administer and interpret them.

Curriculum Design and Teaching Strategies for the Gifted:

This course is designed to assist the student in learning about various curriculum models used with the different types of gifted children and appropriate teaching strategies implied by these models. Curriculum and student evaluation strategies will be presented.

Program Design and Development:

This course is designed to assist students in learning about various program prototypes and their implementation in a variety of school settings.

Program evaluation strategies will be discussed.

Creative Problem Solving:

This course is designed to assist students in learning about the nature of creativity, various curriculum models for enhancing creativity, and in developing their own creative potential.

Group Dynamics: Emerging Leadership:

This course is designed to assist students in their understanding of the nature of leadership and ways in which leadership ability can be developed.

Seminar: Research in Gifted Education:

This course is designed to allow the student to review recent research on various aspects of gifted education and to discuss implications of research to practical problems. A student may use these hours to engage in a research project on gifted education.

Seminar: Curriculum Design Related to Subject Area Specialty:

This seminar is designed to assist students in developing curriculum modules, materials and activities based on their subject area specialty and various curriculum models and strategies appropriate for the gifted.

Practicum: Gifted Education:

This experience is provided to assist the student in integrating his skills in working with children in various gifted programs.

Internship: Gifted Education:

The internship will provide students an opportunity to plan, develop, and implement a program for gifted children in a variety of learning environments.